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Reagan cabinet: tough, pragmatic team shaping up

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Ronald Reagan is not reaching out for ideologues as he sifts candidates for his top appointments.

Instead, the common element apparent in likely selections — such as Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. (USA, ret.) for secretary of state, Caspar W. Weinberger for secretary of defense, William French Smith as attorney general, and William J. Casey as CIA director — is a hard-nosed ability to operate well in situations where practical, tough judgments must be made.

A source close to the President-elect says of the Reagan selections: "Reagan is not going to have one extreme or the other in his cabinet, those whose passions might cause conflict and make it difficult to get the job done."

There are, in fact, some ideological lines. General Haig is a moderate on domestic matters, a hard-liner on defense.

Mr. Weinberger is somewhere near the middle of the GOP spectrum on domestic issues. But he is a dedicated budget-cutter who wields a sharp knife when it comes to waste.

Mr. Casey's early political ties were with Dwight D. Eisenhower. Also, Casey is a New York Republican, which means he is a little more moderate than Republicans elsewhere.

Walter B. Wriston, chairman of Citicorp, is being mentioned for Treasury. He too is much more a pragmatist than a political ideologue. But, says one Reagan associate, "I don't think he'll get it."

"He [Wriston] is very used to dealing with a lot of Democrats," one observer here says. "He, like Casey, is a New York Republican, certainly somewhere in the Republican middle in his philosophy."

Mr. Smith, Reagan's longtime attorney, is known to be a consistent conservative who has been influential in shaping the President-elect's outlook on politics and issues.

But Smith also is not considered to be on

the far right.

Other names of possible Reagan appointees also surfacing include:

- Former US Sen. Clifford P. Hansen of Wyoming for interior secretary.

- Drew Lewis, deputy chairman of the Republican National Committee, for secretary of transportation.

- Thomas Sowell, a University of California economist and a black, for secretary of housing and urban development.

- Ray Donovan, a construction company executive who was in charge of the Reagan campaign in New Jersey, for labor secretary.

- Bill Brock, chairman of the Republican National Committee, for secretary of commerce.

Another being mentioned for labor secretary is Betty Murphy, former chairwoman of the National Labor Relations Board.

No definite ideological thread is apparent in this list of names either, although Mr. Hansen is known to be on the conservative side and the others perhaps more moderate.

But this same source close to Reagan insists that "loyalty, of course, is a test. But competence is of prime importance. And ideology is secondary."

The cabinet selections are being watched closely for what they may disclose about the President-elect's intentions and about his own political philosophy.

Says one Reagan source: "[He] is setting up this cabinet government, where he will be meeting with some four to seven of his cabinet secretaries every day. He wants people he feels comfortable with — people who get along with each other. That's a basic consideration in these appointments."

In this vein, it is understood that William Simon, a favorite candidate of conservatives for secretary of the Treasury, was eliminated from consideration. Some advisers told the President-elect that, while highly competent, Mr. Simon is not a "team player" and that his abrasiveness would be detrimental to the smooth running of the administration.